

Thursday, June 10, 2010

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Carnahan To Hold Events At Senior Centers Throughout 3rd District Monday

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3) announced that starting today, Medicare begins mailing out \$250 'donut hole' checks to tens of thousands of seniors who struggle to afford prescription drugs. Under the recently enacted health insurance reform law, seniors who fall in the donut hole coverage gap in 2010 will receive this one-time tax-free \$250 rebate check. These checks will continue to be mailed monthly over the next several months as seniors enter the coverage gap.

"Prescription drugs cost many people thousands of dollars a year," Carnahan said. "Now, help is on the way. This check is just the first step to closing the donut hole, strengthening Medicare and improving health care for our seniors."

Last year, roughly 82,000 Medicare beneficiaries in Missouri fell in the donut hole and received no extra help to defray the cost of their prescription drugs. Now help is on the way. The checks are just the first benefit championed by Russ Carnahan this year for seniors in the Medicare Prescription Drug program. Beginning in January 2011, seniors in the donut hole will receive a 50% discount on brand name drugs. By 2020, the donut hole will be completely closed.

"Republicans created the donut hole - leaving thousands of seniors to choose between buying the prescriptions they need and putting food on the table. Then they refused to help close it. Now, they are talking about repealing the law that we passed to fix the problem," Carnahan said. "I will not let anyone take this help away from thousands of Missouri seniors who are counting on it."

The 'donut hole' coverage gap is the period in the prescription drug benefit (once their prescription drug costs exceed \$2,830) in which the beneficiary pays 100 percent of the cost of their drugs until they hit the catastrophic coverage threshold. Medicare recipients don't have to do anything to get the \$250 check - once their drug costs for the year hit \$2,830 the one-time check will be issued automatically.

On Monday, Carnahan will talk with older Missourians throughout the 3rd Congressional District, visiting senior centers in St. Louis County, Jefferson County, and St. Louis City to discuss the \$250 'donut hole' checks as well as to other ways the new law is improving health care for seniors, including:

- Free preventive care services under Medicare, beginning in 2011.
- Extending Medicare solvency by an additional 12 years, from 2017 to 2029.
- Improve seniors' access to doctors.
- Continue to reduce waste, fraud and abuse.
- Improve care by helping doctors communicate and coordinate.
- Expands home and community-based services to keep seniors in their home, instead of in nursing homes.

"Those calling to repeal this law would return us to a system of higher drug costs, shrinking benefits, and insecurity for our seniors," Congressman Carnahan said. **"They would rather protect insurance company profits at the expense of the care our seniors need and deserve."**

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